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DE RUEHGB #1956/01 1650114  
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P 140114Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1680  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001956

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: POTENTIAL NEW COR SPEAKERS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1935  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1934

Classified by PolCouns Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Since the June 11 vote in parliament to send Speaker Mashadani on indefinite leave, his political bloc has been trying to coordinate his graceful departure and a nominee to replace him. Uncertainty may continue until a new speaker gains the vote of an absolute majority of 138 CoR members (only 113 voted for the June 11 resolution). That vote could take place as early as June 19 if political agreement has been reached. Tawafuq, which began its search from a narrow field of candidates, still has no clear frontrunner, and Mashadani may yet survive. Following is background on the names being discussed most actively. Each must be scrutinized according to political standing and potential leadership skills in managing an unwieldy legislature. End summary.

Help wanted  
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[1](#)2. (C) The CoR in effect advertised for a new speaker from the Tawafuq bloc when it voted June 11 to send Mashadani on indefinite leave and hand the reigns temporarily to First Deputy Speaker Khalid al-Attiya. However, the apparent Tawafuq commitment to get Mashadani's resignation has yet to convince the man himself, who has not come to terms with his ouster. Mashadani reiterated June 12 his claim that any change in the CoR speaker essentially unravels the political agreements of 2006, in which the heads of all three branches of government were allocated. He argues that the President and Prime Minister should be on the chopping block right along with him and has threatened to sue. Tawafuq continues to cajole Mashadani, who has survived previous attempts to dump him, while at the same time seeking a new candidate whose nomination would not split the bloc or undermine Sunni equities.

[1](#)3. (C) A strong speaker, from the Tawafuq perspective, must carry political weight (in which age and experience are factors), demonstrate an ability to deliver for a Sunni constituency, maintain the respect of other political forces, and highlight the leadership quality of Tawafuq. Institutionally, the CoR needs a leader who can muster a regular quorum, manage an often animated and emotional debate, set the agenda in advance of sessions to ensure focused debate, energize committees to do the detail work on their issues (avoiding petty issues derailing the agenda in plenary session), coordinate carefully with the executive branch, grapple with myriad administrative details, and navigate the rich political minefields of Baghdad. This is a tall order, further complicated by the need to keep political balance within Tawafuq -- thus narrowing the field considerably.

[1](#)4. (C) A successful nominee must also gain support from the Shia and Kurdish blocs, both to win the chair and to be

effective in it. A candidate with strong Tawafuq credentials but a poor image outside the bloc, therefore, stands little chance. Names in this category include Tawafuq head Adnan Duleimi and National Dialogue Council leader Khalaf Alayan, who are viewed by many political opponents as too closely tied to terrorists.

#### Potential candidates

15. (C) The following have emerged as potential candidates.

-- OSAMA TAWFIQ MIKHLEF AL-TIKRITI. A senior member of IIP (VP Tareq al-Hashemi's Iraqi Islamic Party), he is approaching 70 and might carry the weight of a senior statesman. Prior reporting suggests that IIP has been grooming him for a senior position -- to include Speaker -- and thus has made some political investment in him already. While al-Tikriti may seem like a logical choice over Alayan, IIP member Ala Makki told PolOffs June 12 that the selection of an IIP nominee as speaker may require some sort of "compensation" to the NDC (possibly a ministerial position in a future cabinet reshuffle).

-- AYAD SALEH MAHDI AL-SAMARA'I. The very capable head of the CoR Finance Committee, al-Samara'i is just over 60 years old and carries the weight of experience along with a flexible political style. He has represented IIP as deputy chair of the Constitutional Review Committee and by all accounts won high marks for professionalism, technical understanding, and political balancing skills. He is respected within the IIP and in other blocs. The Embassy has a robust relationship with him, particularly on issues related to finance, economics, and constitutional review, but

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also as a sounding board for what is taking place inside Tawafuq.

-- DHAFAER NADHEM SALMAN AL-ANI. A mid-level Tawafuq member in his late 40's, al-Ani hails from the eight-member Iraqi People's Conference (of which Adnan Duleimi is a senior member). His background as an intelligence official may, by some accounts, be a strike against him. Tawafuq secured for him, with some political effort, the chairmanship of the CoR Governorates Committee, from which al-Ani resigned after the Regions Formation law was passed in October. The resignation caused some angst within Tawafuq. Al-Ani's name began to appear in press stories on the evening of June 11 as a possible new Speaker. Both al-Ani and al-Samara'i reportedly signed the controversial (and short-lived) "Cairo Declaration" in late April which caused the GoI some heartburn and might require some consoling of the Shia bloc to gain their approval as speaker.

-- SALIM ABDULLAH AHMAD AL-JEBOORI. Deputy Chair of the CoR Legal Affairs Committee, the 35-year-old al-Jeboori is spokesman for the IIP. His technical expertise, particularly on legal issues, and well-spoken media style win him high marks within the CoR. He likely needs more years of political experience to carry the mantle of senior leadership, although his instincts are good. He has been a helpful interlocutor for the Embassy on issues pending before the CoR.

-- KHALAF ALAYAN KHALAF AL-DULEIMI. Chair of the seven-member National Dialogue Council (NDC), a Tawafuq component of which Mashadani is also a member, Alayan's appointment would maintain the political balance. A former colonel in the Iraqi Army, a tribal leader, and businessman, he was jailed for dissident activity in the early 1980s. His manner is combative, however, and some cite terrorist ties. One Tawafuq member told PolOff, only partially in jest, that Mashadani might engage you in a shouting match but Alayan would just draw a pistol on you. Another Tawafuq leader suggested his name to PolOffs as one who could maintain the

current political balance and possibly provoke other blocs to make concessions (even if they only floated his name as a candidate with no intention of giving him the job.)

-- WILD CARDS. Depending on the progress of deliberations within Tawafuq and with leaders of other blocs, one cannot rule out the nomination of another Tawafuq member, to include the aging but outspoken bloc leader Adnan Duleimi, whose name has been put forth in the past as a potential speaker. In the often stranger-than-fiction politics of Baghdad, and given the delicate balance within Tawafuq, some still do not rule out Mashadani's return. Additionally, an independent Sunni figure could also be called in to assist (like Iraqiyya member and former Transitional National Assembly speaker Hajim al-Hassani). It is too early to print the playbill.

The clock ticks

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¶6. (C) The parameters of the current political equation have Tawafuq at the center of a challenging decision; the bloc must name a candidate who can garner strong Shia and Kurdish support. Tawafuq only controls 44 seats in a 275-member chamber that must endorse a new speaker with an absolute majority (of 138). It hopes to arrive at a decision in less than a week. A balanced political figure like al-Tikriti or al-Samura'i would appear to be a natural choice, but only if Mashadani can be persuaded to resign gracefully, NDC can be "compensated" to seal the deal, and other blocs lend their support. At present we are hearing more questions than answers -- as politicians seem to frame the questions in similar terms yet have little sense of a frontrunner.  
CROCKER